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April 5, 2017

The Honorable Mitch Carmichael
Senate President
Room 229M, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

The Honorable Tim Armstead
Speaker of the House of Delegates
Room 228M, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Re: West Virginia State Police Forensic Crime Lab

Dear Senate President Carmichael and Speaker of the House Armstead:

The West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory ("State Police Crime Lab") faces a funding crisis with 4,671 cases, the majority in the Drug Identification Section and Toxicology, awaiting lab testing.¹ The State Police Crime Lab plays a critical role in our fight against substance abuse by ensuring that drug traffickers are prosecuted while innocent parties are exonerated. In some instances, the lab's backlog resulted in the dismissal of criminal cases. Eliminating the lab's backlog will not only reduce the occurrence of dismissal, but also reduce jail costs by expediting trials. Last year, my office contributed \$1 million to the State Police Crime Lab which helped them hire additional analysts, offer overtime, and purchase equipment for the Drug Identification Section.

After speaking with law enforcement professionals from around the state, the crime lab's backlog remains a common concern. We urge the Legislature to fund the state crime lab. Reducing the backlog can be accomplished, in part, by devoting some of the settlement funds my

¹ State of West Virginia Police, *The Lab Report*, March 2017.

office received in lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies. Because these settlements are healthcare related, it only makes sense to invest these funds into our state's biggest healthcare challenge—the substance abuse epidemic. We remain hopeful that the Legislature will continue with their commitment to fight prescription drug and heroin abuse.

Very respectfully yours,



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